

THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL

SPEECH

OF

HON. CHARLES E. PICKETT

OF IOWA

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 29, 1913



WASHINGTON
1913

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The House had under consideration Senate joint resolution (S. J. Res. 158) approving the plan, design, and location for a Lincoln memorial.

The SPEAKER. The gentleman from Iowa [Mr. PICKETT] is recognized for one hour.

Mr. PICKETT. Mr. Speaker, I will say in advance I do not expect to consume an hour of time. All are desirous of reaching a vote this afternoon, and many Members have expressed a desire for time.

While here and there among the membership of the House there are those who differ as to the details of the proposed memorial, although concurring in the finding that it should be erected in Washington, it is manifest that the best organized and most aggressive opposition to the plan proposed comes from those who for one cause or another are in favor of the highway to Gettysburg. I do not question the high-minded and patriotic impulses of the Members of this House who favor that proposition. It is well, however, for the people of the country to know something of the influences that have been the most active in the campaign that has been carried on to promote the highway project. I therefore desire to insert in the RECORD at this time an extract from a letter written by the executive secretary of the Lincoln Memorial Road Association of America. I am free to confess that when the road to Gettysburg was first suggested I was favorably impressed. I am a believer in good roads, and perhaps my feelings on the general subject of good roads influenced to some extent a friendly feeling for the Gettysburg highway. This predisposition was soon changed when the question was taken up for serious consideration.

The letter, after calling attention to the importance, from a good-roads point of view, of the Federal Government taking an initial step, proceeds as follows:

We are therefore conducting a national campaign of publicity and organization to get the wishes of the people before Congress. As a part of this campaign it is very desirable to send a personal letter with a leaflet and form like the inclosed to 1,000 leading citizens in each of 275 congressional districts, asking those addressed to take this matter up with their Congressmen and Senators. To put these letters with inclosures in the mail costs about \$45 per 1,000, or a total of \$12,375. Having in mind the far-reaching importance of this matter, one of the good-roads committee connected with the automobile industry has subscribed \$2,500 to aid our publicity campaign. Many of the leading automobile clubs and individual manufacturers have subscribed varying amounts. You may have subscribed directly or indirectly, but even if that is the case it is vital to the success of this movement that you subscribe a substantial amount in addition, as more money is urgently needed and a popular subscription could not be raised in time to be available.

This extract speaks for itself and discloses that the campaign, for such it can very properly be called, that has been

conducted by this so-called Lincoln Memorial Road Association is in the interest of good roads and the automobile industry. It also throws some light on the source from which the funds emanated to defray the expense. The letter concludes as follows:

In addition to making a substantial subscription now, I hope that each of your executive officers will write a personal letter to his Congressman and his two United States Senators, urging them to favor the plan for the Lincoln memorial which includes the road to Gettysburg and that you will arrange to have each of your representatives and agents throughout the country do the same.

That they have done so is evidenced not only by other documentary proof of record but by the numerous letters and telegrams that have been pouring in to Members of Congress from automobile concerns, urging them to appropriately memorialize Lincoln by building a highway to Gettysburg. [Applause.]

Yesterday while my distinguished friend from Missouri [Mr. BORLAND] was addressing the House he inserted in the RECORD and criticized a letter written by the Fairmount Park Art Association, of Philadelphia, to the Members of Congress from Pennsylvania, expressing views in opposition to the Gettysburg highway as a memorial to Lincoln. A little later in his remarks the gentleman inserted in the RECORD what seemed to me a rather remarkable letter, which I desire at this time to read:

THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND BUSINESS MEN'S CLUB,
San Antonio, Tex., January 24, 1913.

Hon. WILLIAM P. BORLAND, M. C.,
Washington, D. C.

DEAR SIR: I have yours of the 16th inclosing Library Committee's report on the Greek temple proposition, for which accept thanks.

I appreciate your sending me this report very much, and I immediately got busy and distributed these reports among our influential—

Citizens who are interested in securing the best and most appropriate memorial to Lincoln? Oh, no—

among our influential good-roads enthusiasts—

Think of it! What a bald confession! Not even an attempt to mask the real designs.

The letter proceeds—

and in a few hours gathered them up and redistributed them—

The gentleman is certainly not lacking in activity or zeal for good roads—

and in addition to that I had one of our daily papers print the report and also print a statement from myself and others who had picked this report all to pieces and explained to the people the ridiculous part of it.

This is certainly rich—

Almost every organization of any kind whatsoever in San Antonio has wired Representative SLAYDEN insisting that he support the Washington to Gettysburg highway, and these telegrams have been constantly going to Mr. SLAYDEN for over two weeks, and more especially since it was referred back to his committee. The Washington Post clipping you sent me was published in one of our daily papers the day I received your clipping.

Evidently even gentlemen here have been interested in seeing that the press of the country are kept in touch with their proposition through the various good-roads enthusiasts.

Yesterday there was a telegram sent to Hon. JOHN N. GARNER, which reads as follows:

"We appreciate your efforts in behalf of the Lincoln memorial highway and pledge our assistance at any time we can be of help to this cause.

"J. W. WARREN,
"President Texas Good Roads Association.

"CHAS. GRAEBNER,
"President Chamber of Commerce.

"A. M. FISCHER,
"President Bexar County Highway League.

"CHAS. O. AUSTIN,
"President Real Estate Exchange.

"ATLEE B. AYRES,
"President Fiesta Division of C. C."

In addition to this quite a number of Mr. GARNER's admirers are writing him personal letters. In addition, our highway division, the real estate exchange, Chamber of Commerce, Fiesta Association, and the San Antonio Automobile Club have asked me to express their gratitude to you for the noble work that you are doing for this highway.

Not for a *Lincoln memorial*, but for "this highway."

We all assure you that we appreciate it, and I hope that I will have the pleasure of meeting you on March 6 and 7 at the good-roads convention, which will be held in Washington.

Yours, very truly,

D. E. COLP, *Secretary*.

Whether intentionally or unintentionally there is manifest from this letter a very distinct back fire on the distinguished chairman of the committee, Mr. SLAYDEN, who for 14 years has been an honored Member of this House, and who, as chairman of this committee, has been conscientiously seeking to discharge his duty.

I submit that it is evident from the letter of the Lincoln Memorial Road Association, as well as from the letter I have just read and many other things with which the Members of this House are familiar, that this movement for the highway to Gettysburg has been promoted largely by good-roads enthusiasts, the automobile industry, and other business concerns.

When we witness the zeal with which they are seeking to use the sacred name of Lincoln to enhance their profits, it almost recalls the ghoulish humor from the grave scene in Hamlet.

Imperial Caesar dead and turned to clay
Might stop a hole to keep the winds away.

This House will never permit the sainted memory of Lincoln to be commercialized for pecuniary profit. [Applause.]

Mr. BORLAND. Will the gentleman yield to me for a minute?

Mr. PICKETT. With pleasure.

Mr. BORLAND. Will the gentleman also read the letter from the Fairmont Park Art Association?

Mr. PICKETT. I will not read it in my time. It is printed in the RECORD as a part of the gentleman's remarks of yesterday, and I referred to it.

Mr. BORLAND. I trust the gentleman in fairness will read the literature in reference to the Greek temple side of the controversy.

Mr. PICKETT. You had an opportunity to read it.

Mr. BORLAND. I did read it yesterday.

Mr. PICKETT. And I am now replying.

I will add, however, that there is nothing in the letter issued by the Fairmont Park Association which does not go to the

merits of the proposition, and certainly there is nothing which reflects any personal interest that the members of the association have in any line of business that will be promoted by any action taken by Congress in this matter.

Mr. Speaker, the memorial proposed in the pending resolution comes before the House not as the product of hasty action by the committee to which it was referred. It has been considered for years and embodies the best thought and contributions of the highest authorities on such subjects. It comes before this House with the deliberate and ripened judgment of the distinguished citizens who compose the Lincoln Memorial Commission, representing all parties and all sections, and which held 16 meetings during the consideration of the subject; with the approval of the gentlemen who compose the Fine Arts Commission, selected for their high repute in the world of art; with the approval of the Senate, whose unanimity of action reflects its cordial indorsement of the memorial; and, lastly, with the unanimous recommendation of your own committee, which has given to the subject its best thought and endeavor.

I do not know how many of the Members of the House have read the document which I hold in my hand, containing the report of the Lincoln Memorial Commission; extracts from the report of the Fine Arts Commission, and also extracts from the architect's description. It is difficult to conceive how anyone could read them without being carried irresistibly to a conclusion favorable to the memorial proposed. For the purpose of having it appear in the RECORD, I may be pardoned for quoting briefly two paragraphs therefrom, one a quotation from the late Hon. John Hay:

As I understand it, the place of honor is on the main axis of the plan. Lincoln, of all Americans next to Washington, deserves this place of honor. He was of the immortals. You must not approach too close to the immortals. His monument should stand alone, remote from the common habitations of man, apart from the business and turmoil of the city—isolated, distinguished, and serene. Of all the sites, this one, near the Potomac, is most suited to the purpose.

The other from the description of the architect who designed the memorial:

On the great axis, planned over a century ago, we have at one end the Capitol, which is the monument of the Government, and to the west, over a mile distant from the Capitol, is the monument to Washington, one of the founders of the Government. If the Lincoln memorial is built on this same axis still farther to the west, by the shore of the Potomac, we will there have the monument of the man who saved the Government, thus completing an unparalleled composition which can not fail to impart to each of its monuments a value in addition to that which each standing alone would possess.

There is a touch of the immortal in the isolation with which the architect enshrouds the names of Washington and Lincoln. The conception is lofty, one that grows upon you the more you study it. Washington was the commanding figure in the epoch which secured our independence and established our institutions. Lincoln was the potential figure in the epoch which tested the unity of our Republic and made our liberty real.

Washington and Lincoln will forever stand companionless in American history. They rise in their isolation as our two great citizens. [Applause.]

The word "immortal" is used with such abandon that its true significance is all too often lost. Time may be a cruel, but is a seldom erring, critic. To be immortal means more than to have achieved distinction in an epoch or a place among the great of an age or a cycle. It rests upon achievements which survive the receding years and live forever in the hearts of men. [Applause.]

Reflect for a moment upon the concept of the memorial. At one end of the main axis is the Capitol of the Nation, in the center the Monument to Washington, and at the other end the memorial to Lincoln. Looking into the future we can see the extension across the Potomac to Arlington, and then we will have at one end the Capitol, at the other Arlington, and in between the Monument to Washington and the memorial to Lincoln. The citizen, as he journeys thither, will first visit his Capitol with all that it symbolizes. He will then turn his eyes down the long vista to behold the Monument to Washington, the Father of his Country; beyond, the memorial to Lincoln, the savior of our Union; and yonder, in the distance on the green hillside of Virginia, once a part of Dixie but now and forever, thank God, a part of our common country, his eyes will stop at Arlington, where sleep the Nation's heroic dead. The Capitol, Washington, Lincoln, Arlington. What a sublime equation! What an immortal association! What a companionship for the ages! [Applause.]

The gentleman from Missouri [Mr. BORLAND], in his remarks this afternoon, suggested that the highway to Gettysburg "could be made one of the show places of the world." Think of it! The name of Lincoln utilized to make one of the "show places of the world." I do not know whether the gentleman from Missouri intended the meaning which the language imports, but this I know, it would be the result if the highway plan is adopted.

I do not care to discuss whether the highway could or could not be built within the appropriation. That question is of minor importance in the light of the graver consideration, How could it be protected by the Government from being used for purposes which would destroy any element of a Lincoln memorial? The Federal Government would have no jurisdiction over lands adjacent or contiguous to the highway, and they would be used, by the same spirit of commercialism which we have already seen manifest, for show places, amusement parks, and the like. The papers would be filled with advertisements of vaudeville performances and all the modern novelties of entertainment designed to attract the curious or pleasure-seeking crowd. In automobile phraseology it would be known as the "great joy ride of the country." I am unwilling that Lincoln's name should be thus desecrated. This is a good time and a fitting occasion for the Congress of the United States to give a practical lesson in American patriotism. [Applause.]

Contrast, if you please, the difference in the effect upon the mind and heart of the future citizen between an automobile trip over a highway to Gettysburg and a visit to the memorial proposed in the pending resolution. After visiting the Capitol of his country, with all its hallowed traditions and all that it brings to his heart, and then a visit to Washington's Monument,

he pursues his way to Lincoln's memorial, rising with its lines of strength and beauty before him. In the center hall, 60 feet wide, 70 feet long, and 60 feet high—higher than this Chamber—he pauses in silent communion before a beautiful bronze statue of Lincoln. He then turns to read in bronze Lincoln's matchless speech at Gettysburg, and then in another place Lincoln's second inaugural, the closing paragraph of which is burnished in every American heart. That one sentence, "With malice toward none, with charity for all," has no counterpart in literature save the one which fell from the lips of the Great Master, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." [Applause.]

Mr. Speaker, it is with such an inspiration I would leave the pilgrim patriot at the shrine of Lincoln. [Applause.]

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